

WorkFirst Partnership and Customer Service

December 2006

- *The number of families on welfare in Washington dropped 43 percent since WorkFirst began, from nearly 91,000 in 1997 to approximately 51,500 in September 2006.*
- *More than 169,900 parents have left welfare and stayed off.*
- *The proportion of people on welfare in Washington is at its lowest point in more than 30 years.*

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For more information about the WorkFirst program, visit www.workfirst.wa.gov

What is the WorkFirst partnership?

Washington initiated the WorkFirst program in August 1997 to help low-income parents become self-sufficient. WorkFirst is an integrated service delivery system. Six agencies use their expertise to help WorkFirst families move from welfare to work, and ultimately financial independence.

The **Office of Financial Management (OFM)** oversees the WorkFirst program and is responsible for managing the budget and monitoring program performance. In addition, OFM supports 32 Local Area Planning partnerships across the state providing services to WorkFirst families in their communities.

The **Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)** is the entry point and ongoing contact point for families in the WorkFirst program. After eligibility for public assistance is established, the agency provides an orientation to the program and assigns parents a case manager who will work with them to develop an Individual Responsibility Plan, encourage participation towards the goal of getting a job, and help manage barriers to employment. DSHS also arranges for support services such as transportation, food, clothing and child care subsidies.

The **Employment Security Department (ESD)** makes the employment connection through job search, job retention and wage progression services. Job service specialists provide intensive services to prepare parents to market themselves to employers, find jobs and to move up the wage ladder. Parents are directed to jobs that match their skills and interests and offer the best wages and opportunities for advancement.

The **State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC)** assures training and basic skills education is available at 34 community and technical colleges across the state. The colleges have shorter courses, offered during non-working hours and geared toward specific high demand jobs available to WorkFirst parents. They also offer programs that integrate basic skills and English as a Second Language with workforce training and full-time, short-term customized training programs that lead directly to employment.

The **Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED)** administers the Community Jobs program, which contracts with local service providers to deliver services for WorkFirst parents with multiple barriers to employment. Community Jobs combines a part-time subsidized job with training, providing an opportunity to gain work experience and skills, increase income, and gain self-confidence. CTED also works with local business communities.

The **Department of Early Learning (DEL)** sets the policy for Working Connections Child Care. This program provides assistance with child care payments to low-income working families and WorkFirst recipients engaged in work-related activities.